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Japanese Lyrics

Translated by
Lafcadio Hearn

THE NEW POETRY SERIES



HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
Boston and New York



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JAPANESE LYRICS



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TRANSLATED BY
LAFCADIO HEARN



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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1915

W.

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Seki wa yoi toko,
Asahi wo ukete;
O-Yama arashiga
Soyo-soyoto !

SONG OF MIONOSEKI.

[Seki is a goodly place, facing the morning sun. There, from the holy mountains, the winds blow softly, softly, — soyo-soyoto.]

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

SCATTERED through the pages of Lafcadio Hearn's writings are many Japanese lyrics. So graceful are these little poems, so characteristic, in their swift, sure impressionism, of Oriental art, that it has seemed worth while to bring them together within the compass of a single volume.

It is perhaps unnecessary to analyze here the distinctive features of Japanese poetry. The reader will understand that as the poets relied for their effect largely upon the opportunities for subtle and intricate double meanings afforded by the peculiar structure of the Japanese language, it is scarcely possible to do them justice in an alien tongue. But these translations, though faithful to the original, have the innate feeling for beauty, the instinctive sense of the right word, the perfect phrase, common to everything that came from Hearn's pen.

To preserve the volume from the appearance of undue weightiness the interpretive notes with which the poems are accompanied have been reduced to the smallest possible compass. Indeed, in many cases the elaborate plays upon words are too involved to be susceptible of explanation.

In their limitation of a poem to the presentation of a

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

single impression and in their ability to present that impression with the utmost vividness and with the sternest economy of words, these Japanese poets are strangely akin to the Imagists, the youngest of the modern schools. And for this reason it has seemed peculiarly appropriate that their work should be included in the NEW POETRY SERIES.

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JAPANESE LYRICS
INSECT POEMS

JAPANESE LYRICS

Nugi-kakuru
Haori sugata no
Kochō kana!



Torisashi no
Sao no jama suru,
Kochō kana!



Tsurigané ni
Tomarité nemuru
Kochō kana!



Néru-uchi mo
Asobu-yumé wo ya—
Kusa no chō!



Oki, oki yo!
Waga tomo ni sen,
Néru-kochō!



Kago no tori
Chō wo urayamu
Metsuki kana!



Chō tondé—
Kazé naki hi to mo
Miēzari ki!

INSECT POEMS

*Like a woman slipping off her haori — that
is the appearance of a butterfly.*

*Ah, the butterfly keeps getting in the way of
the bird-catcher's pole !*

*Perched upon the temple-bell, the butterfly
sleeps :*

*Even while sleeping, its dream is of play —
ah, the butterfly of the grass !*

*Wake up ! wake up ! — I will make thee my
comrade, thou sleeping butterfly.*

*Ah, the sad expression in the eyes of that caged
bird ! — envying the butterfly !*

*Even though it did not appear to be a windy
day, the fluttering of the butterflies — !*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Rakkwa éda ni
Kaëru to miréba —
Kochō kana!



Chiru-hana ni —
Karusa arasou
Kochō kana!



Chōchō ya!
Onna no michi no
Ato ya saki!



Chōchō ya!
Hana-nusubito wo
Tsukété-yuku!



Aki no chō
Tomo nakéréba ya;
Hito ni tsuku.



Owarété mo,
Isoganu furi no
Chōcho kana!



Chō wa mina
Jiu-shichi-hachi no
Sugata kana!

INSECT POEMS

When I saw the fallen flower return to the branch— lo! it was only a butterfly!²

How the butterfly strives to compete in lightness with the falling flowers!

See that butterfly on the woman's path,— now fluttering behind her, now before!

Ha! the butterfly! —it is following the person who stole the flowers!

Poor autumn butterfly! —when left without a comrade, it follows after man!

Ah, the butterfly! Even when chased, it never has the air of being in a hurry.

As for butterflies, they all have the appearance of being about seventeen or eighteen years old.³

JAPANESE LYRICS

Chō tobu ya —
Kono yo no urami
Naki yō ni!



Chō tobu ya,
Kono yo ni nozomi
Nai yō ni!



Nami no hana ni
Tomari kanétaru,
Kochō kana!



Mutsumashi ya! —
Umaré-kawaraba
Nobé no chō.



Nadéshiko ni
Chōchō shiroshi —
Taré no kon?



Ichi-nichi no
Tsuma to miékéri —
Chō futatsu.



Kité wa maū,
Futari shidzuka no
Kochō kana!

INSECT POEMS

*How the butterfly sports, — just as if there
were no enmity in this world!*

*Ah, the butterfly! — it sports about as if it
had nothing more to desire in this present state of
existence.*

*Having found it difficult indeed to perch upon
the (foam-) blossoms of the waves, — alas for the
butterfly!*

*If (in our next existence) we be reborn as but-
terflies upon the moor, then perchance we may be
happy together!*

*On the pink-flower there is a white butterfly:
whose spirit, I wonder?*

*The one-day wife has at last appeared — a
pair of butterflies!*

*Approaching they dance; but when the two
meet at last they are very quiet, the butterflies!*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Chō wo oū
Kokoro-mochitashi
Itsumadémo !



Yoku é naki:
Ari no sumai ya!
Go-getsu amé.



Hito koe wa.
Tsuki ga naitaka
Hototogisu !



Hototogisu
Nakitsuru kata wo
Nagamureba, —
Tada ariake no
Tsuki zo nokoreru.



Hototogisu
Chi ni naku koe wa
Ariake no
Tsuki yori hokani
Kiku hito mo nashi.

INSECT POEMS

*Would that I might always have the desire of
chasing butterflies!*

*Now the poor creature has nowhere to go! . . .
Alas for the dwellings of the ants in this rain of
the fifth month!*

*A solitary voice! Did the Moon cry? 'Twas
but the hototogisu.⁴*

*When I gaze towards the place where I heard
the hototogisu cry, lo! there is naught save the wan
morning moon.*

*Save only the morning moon, none heard the
heart's-blood cry of the hototogisu.*

**LULLABIES
AND
CHILDREN'S VERSE**

JAPANESE LYRICS

Nenneko,
O-yama no
Usagi no ko,
Naze mata
O-mimi ga
Nagai e yara?
Okkasan no
O-naka ni
Oru toku ni,
Biwa no ha,
Sasa no ha,
Tabeta sona;
Sore de
O-mimi ga
Nagai e sona.

LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

Sleep, baby, sleep! Why are the honorable ears of the Child of the Hare of the honorable mountain so long? 'Tis because when he dwelt within her honored womb, his mamma ate the leaves of the loquat, the leaves of the bamboo-grass. That is why his honorable ears are so long.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Nono-San,

or

O-Tsuki-San

Ikutsu?

“Jiu-san,—

Kokonotsu.”

Sore wa mada

Wakai yo,

Wakai ye mo

Dōri

Akai iro no

Obi to,

Shiro iro no

Obi to

Koshi ni shanto

Musun de.

Uma ni yaru?

“Iyaiya!”

Ushi ni yaru?

“Iyaiya!”

LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

*Nono-San,
Little Lady Moon,
How old are you ?
"Thirteen days, —
Thirteen and nine."
That is still young,
And the reason must be
For that bright red obi,
So nicely tied,
And that nice white girdle
About your hips.
Will you give it to the horse ?
"Oh, no, no !"
Will you give it to the cow ?
"Oh, no, no !"*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Tobi, tobi, maute mise!
Ashita no ba ni
Karasu ni kakushite
Nezumi yaru.



Ato no karasu saki ine,
Ware ga iye ga yakeru ken,
Hayō inde midzu kake,
Midzu ga nakya yarozo,
Amattara ko ni yare,
Ko ga nakya modose.



Hotaru kōe midzu nomashō;
Achi no midzu wa nigaizo;
Kochi no midzu wa amaizo.



Chō-chō, chō-chō, na no ha ni tomare;
Na no ha ga iyenara, te ni tomare.



Daidaimushi, daidaimushi, tsuno chitto dashare!
Ame kaze fuku kara tsuno chitto dashare!

LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

Kite, kite, let me see you dance, and to-morrow evening, when the crows do not know, I will give you a rat.

O tardy crow, hasten forward! Your house is all on fire. Hurry to throw water upon it. If there be no water, I will give you. If you have too much, give it to your child. If you have no child, then give it back to me.

Come, firefly, I will give you water to drink. The water of that place is bitter; the water here is sweet.

Butterfly, little butterfly, light upon the na leaf. But if thou dost not like the na leaf, light, I pray thee, upon my hand.

Snail, snail, put out your horns a little: it rains and the wind is blowing, so put out your horns, just for a little while.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Wakakeréba
Nichi-yuki shiraji :
Mahi wa sému,
Shitabé no tsukahi
Ohité-tohorasé.

LULLABIES AND CHILDREN'S VERSE

*As he is so young, he cannot know the way.
... To the messenger of the Underworld I will give
a bribe, and entreat him, saying: "Do thou kindly
take the little one upon thy back along the road,"⁶*

**LOVE SONGS
AND
LYRICS**

JAPANESE LYRICS

Ka-mi-yo ko-no-ka-ta
Ka-wa-ra-nu mo-no wa :
Mi-dzu no na-ga-ré to
Ko-i no mi-chi.



Ekō suru toté
Hotoké no maé yé
Futari mukaité,
Konabé daté.



Adana é-gao ni
Mayowanu mono wa
Ki-Butsu, — kana-Butsu, —
Ishi-botoké !



Asu ari to
Omō kokoro no
Ada-zakura :
Yo wa ni arashi no
Fukanu monokawa?



Kawaru uki-yo ni
Kawaranu mono wa
Kawarumai to no
Koi no michi.

LOVE SONGS AND LYRICS

*Things never changed since the Time of the Gods :
The flowing of water, the Way of Love.*

*Even while praying together in front of the tablets
ancestral,
Lovers find chance to murmur prayers never meant
for the dead !'*

*He who was never bewitched by the charming smile
of a woman,
A wooden Buddha is he — a Buddha of bronze or
stone !*

*Thinking to-morrow remains, thou heart's frail
flower-of-cherry ?
How knowest whether this night the tempest will
not come ?*

*All things change, we are told, in this world of
change and sorrow ;
But love's way never changes of promising never to
change.*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Oya no iken dé
Akirameta no wo
Mata mo rin-yé dé
Omoi-dasu.



Kaäi, kaäi to
Naku mushi yori mo
Nakanu hotaru ga
Mi wo kogasu.
Nanno ingwa dé
Jitsu naki hito ni
Shin wo akashité,—
Aa kuyashi!



Wasuraruru
Mi naran to omō
Kokoro koso
Wasuré nu yori mo
Omoi nari-keré.



Hi kururéba
Sasoëshi mono wo —
Akanuma no
Makomo no kuré no
Hitori-né zo uki!

LOVE SONGS AND LYRICS

*Father and mother forbade, and so I gave up my
lover; —*

*Yet still, with the whirl of the Wheel,⁸ the thought
of him comes and goes.*

*Numberless insects there are that call from dawn
to evening,*

*Crying, “I love! I love!” — but the Firefly’s
silent passion,*

Making its body burn, is deeper than all their longing.

*Even such is my love . . . yet I cannot think
through what ingwa⁹*

I opened my heart — alas! — to a being not sincere!

*To wish to be forgotten by the beloved is a
soul-task harder far than trying not to forget.*

*At the coming of twilight I invited him to
return with me —! Now to sleep alone in the
shadow of the rushes of Akanuma — ah! what
misery unspeakable!”¹⁰*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Kōshi ō-son gojin wo ou ;
Ryokuju namida wo tarété rakin wo hitataru ;
Komon hitotabi irité fukaki koto umi no gotoshi ;
Koré yori shorō koré rojin.



Tadzunétsuru,
Hana ka toté koso,
Hi wo kurasé,
Akénu ni otoru
Akané sasuran ?

Izuru hi no
Honoméku iro wo
Waga sodé ni
Tsutsumaba asu mo
Kimiya tomaran.



Omae shindara tera ewa yaranu !
Yaete konishite sake de nomu.

LOVE SONGS AND LYRICS

*Closely, closely the youthful prince now follows
after the gem-bright maid ; —*

*The tears of the fair one, falling, have moistened
all her robes.*

*But the august lord, having once become enamored
of her — the depth of his longing is like the
depth of the sea.*

*Therefore it is only I that am left forlorn, —
only I that am left to wander alone.*

*Being on my way to pay a visit, I found that
which I took to be a flower : therefore here I spend
the day. . . . Why, in the time before dawn, the
dawn-blush tint should glow — that, indeed, I know
not. "*

*If with my sleeve I hide the faint fair color
of the dawning sun, — then, perhaps, in the morn-
ing my lord will remain.*

*Dear, shouldst thou die, grave shall hold thee
never !*

I thy body's ashes, mixed with wine, will drink.

GOBLIN POETRY

JAPANESE LYRICS

Hi tomoshité
Kitsuné no kwaséshi,
Asobimé wa —
Izuka no uma no
Honé ni ya aruran !



Kitsuné-bi no
Moyuru ni tsukété,
Waga tama no
Kiyuru yō nari
Kokoro-hoso-michi !



Ko-ya, soré to ?
Ayamé mo wakanu
Rikombyō :
Izuré wo tsuma to
Hiku zo wazuraū !



Futatsu naki
Inochi nagara mo
Kakégaë no
Karada no miyuru —
Kagé no wazurai !

GOBLIN POETRY

— *Ab the wanton (lighting her lantern)! —
so a fox-fire¹² is kindled in the time of fox-trans-
formation! . . . Perhaps she is really nothing
more than an old horse-bone¹³ from somewhere
or other. . . .*

*Because of that Fox-fire burning there, the very
soul of me is like to be extinguished in this narrow
path.*

*Which one is this? — which one is that? Be-
tween the two shapes of the Rikombyō¹⁴ it is not
possible to distinguish. To find out which is the real
wife — that will be an affliction of spirit indeed!*

*Two lives there certainly are not; — never-
theless an extra body is visible, by reason of the
Shadow-Sickness.*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Naga-tabi no
Oto wo shitaité
Mi futatsu ni
Naru wa onna no
Sāru rikombyō.



Miru kagé mo
Naki wazurai no
Rikombyō, —
Omoi no hoka ni
Futatsu miru kagé!



Rikombyō
Hito ni kakushité
Oku-zashiki,
Omoté y dēasanu
Kagé no wazurai.



Mi wa koko ni ;
Tama wa otoko ni
Soiné suru ; —
Kokoro mo shiraga
Haha ga kaihō.

GOBLIN POETRY

*Yearning after her far-journeying husband,
the woman has thus become two bodies, by reason of
her ghostly sickness.*

*Though (it was said that), because of her
ghostly sickness, there was not even a shadow of her
left to be seen, — yet, contrary to expectation, there
are two shadows of her to be seen !*

*Afflicted with the Rikombyō, she hides away
from people in the back room, and never approaches
the front of the house, — because of her Shadow-
disease.*

*Here her body lies but her soul is far away,
asleep in the arms of a man; — and the white-haired
mother, little knowing her daughter's heart, is nurs-
ing (only the body).*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Tamakushigé
Futatsu no sugata
Misénuru wa,
Awasé-kagami no
Kagé no wazurai.



Mé wa kagami,
Kuchi wa tarai no
Hodo ni aku :
Gama mo keshō no
Mono to kosō shiré.



Hamaguri no
Kuchi aku toki ya,
Shinkirō !
Yo ni shiraré ken
Tatsu-no-miya-himé !



Shinkirō —
Tatsu no miyako no
Hinagata wo
Shio-hi no oki ni
Misuru hamaguri !

GOBLIN POETRY

*If, when seated before her toilet-stand, she
sees two faces reflected in her mirror, — that might
be caused by the mirror doubling itself under the
influence of the Shadow-Sickness.¹⁵*

*The eye of it, widely open, like a (round)
mirror; the mouth of it opening like a wash-basin
— by these things you may know that the Toad is
a toilet article.¹⁶*

*When the hamaguri¹⁷ opens its mouth — lo!
Shinkirō appears! . . . Then all can clearly see the
Maiden-Princess of the Dragon-Palace.*

*Lo! in the offing at ebb-tide, the hamaguri
makes visible the miniature image of Shinkirō — the
Dragon-Capital!*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Nemidaré no
Nagaki kami woba
Furi-wakété,
Chi hiro ni nobasu
Rokuro-Kubi kana !



“ Atama naki
Bakémono nari ” — to
Rokuro-Kubi,
Mité odorokan
Onoga karada wo.



Tsuka-no-ma ni
Hari wo tsutawaru,
Rokuro-Kubi
Kéta-kéta warau —
Kao no kowasa yo !



Roku shaku no
Byōbu ni nobiru
Rokuro-Kubi
Mité wa, go shaku no
Mi wo chijimi-kéri !

GOBLIN POETRY

*Oh! . . . Shaking loose her long hair disheveled
by sleep, the Rokuro-Kubi¹⁸ stretches her neck to
the length of a thousand fathoms!*

*Will not the Rokuro-Kubi, viewing with as-
tonishment¹⁹ her own body (left behind) cry out,
“Oh, what a headless goblin have you become!”*

*Swiftly gliding along the roof-beam, the Ro-
kuro-Kubi laughs with the sound of “kéta-kéta”
— oh! the fearfulness of her face!*

*Bebolding the Rokuro-Kubi rise up above the
six-foot screen, any five-foot person would have
become shortened by fear.*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Yuki-Onna —
Yosō kushi mo
Atsu kōri;
Sasu-kōgai ya
Kōri naruran.



Honrai wa
Kū naru mono ka,
Yuki-Onna?
Yoku-yoku mireba
Ichi-butsu mo nashi!



Yo-akéréba
Kiété yuku é wa
Shirayuki no
Onna to mishi mo
Yanagi nari-keri!



Yuki-Onna
Mité wa yasathiku,
Matsu wo ori
Nama-daké hishigu
Chikara ari-keri!

GOBLIN POETRY

As for the Snow-Woman,²⁰ — even her best comb, if I mistake not, is made of thick ice; and her hair-pin, too, is probably made of ice.

Was she, then, a delusion from the very first, that Snow-Woman, — a thing that vanishes into empty space? When I look carefully all about me, not one trace of her is to be seen!

Having vanished at daybreak (that Snow-Woman), none could say whither she had gone. But what had seemed to be a snow-white woman became indeed a willow-tree!

"willow"

Though the Snow-Woman appears to sight slender and gentle, yet, to snap the pine-trees asunder and to crush the live bamboos, she must have had strength.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Samukésa ni
Zotto wa surédo
Yuki-Onna, —
Yuki oré no naki
Yanagi-goshi ka mo!



Erimoto yé
Mizu kakéraruru
Kokochi seri,
“Hishaku kasé” chō
Funé no kowané ni.



Yūrei ni
Kasu-hishaku yori
Ichi-hayaku
Onoré ga koshi mo
Nukéru senchō.



Yūrei wa
Ki naru Izumi no
Hito nagara,
Aö-umibara ni
Nadoté itsuran?

GOBLIN POETRY

*Though the Snow-Woman makes one shiver
by her coldness, — ah, the willowy grace of her form
charms us in spite of the cold.*²¹

*As if the nape of our necks had been sprinkled with cold water, — so we felt while listening to the voice of the ship-ghost, saying: — “Lend me a dipper!”*²²

The loins of the captain himself were knocked out very much more quickly than the bottom of the dipper that was to be given to the ghost.

Since any ghost must be an inhabitant of the Yellow Springs,²³ how should a ghost appear on the Blue Sea-Plain?

JAPANESE LYRICS

Sono sugata,
Ikari wo ôté,
Tsuki-matoû
Funé no hésaki ya
Tomomori no réi !



Tsumi fukaki
Umi ni shidzumishi,
Yûréi no
“ Ukaman ” toté ya !
Funé ni sugaréru.



Ukaman to
Funé wo shitaëru
Yûréi wa,
Shidzumishi hito no
Omoi naruran.



Uraméshiki
Sugata wa sugoki
Yûréi no,
Kaji wo jama suru
Funé no Tomomori.

GOBLIN POETRY

*That Shape, carrying the anchor on its back,
and following after the ship — now at the bow and
now at the stern — ah, the ghost of Tomomori.²⁴*

*Crying, “Now perchance I shall be saved!”
the ghost that sank into the deep Sea of Sin clings
to the passing ship!²⁵*

*The ghosts following after our ship in their
efforts to rise again (or, “to be saved”) might per-
haps be the (last vengeful) thoughts²⁶ of drowned
men.*

*With vengeful aspect, the grisly ghost of
Tomomori (rises) at the stern of the ship to hinder
the play of her rudder.*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Ochi-irité,
Uwo no éjiki to
Nari ni ken ; —
Funa-yūrēi mo
Nama-kusaki kazé.



Shiwo-hi ni wa
Séizoroë shité,
Héikégani
Ukiyo no sama wo
Yoko ni niramitsu.



Saikai ni
Shizumi-nurédomo,
Héikégani
Kōra no iro mo
Yahari aka-hata.



Maké-ikusa
Munen to muné ni
Hasami ken ; —
Kao mo makka ni
Naru Héikégani.

GOBLIN POETRY

Having perished in the sea, (those Hēiké) would probably have become food for fishes. (Anyhow, whenever) the ship-following ghosts (appear), the wind has a smell of raw fish!

Marshaled (on the beach) at the ebb of the tide, the Hēiké-crabs²⁷ obliquely glare at the apparition of this miserable world.

crabs

Though (the Hēiké) long ago sank and perished in the Western Sea, the Hēiké-crabs still display upon their upper shells the color of the Red Standard.

Because of the pain of defeat, claws have grown on their breasts, I think; — even the faces of the Hēiké-crabs have become crimson (with anger and shame).

JAPANESE LYRICS

Mikata mina
Oshi-tsubusaréshi
Héikégani
Ikon wo muné ni
Hasami mochikéri.



Tokonoma ni
Ikéshi tachiki mo
Taoré-keri;
Yanari ni yama no
Ugoku kakémono!



Saka-bashira
Tatéshi wa tazo ya?
Kokoro ni mo
Fushi aru hito no
Shiwaza naruran.



Hidayama wo
Kiri-kité tatéshi
Saka-bashira—
Nanno takumi no
Shiwaza naruran?

GOBLIN POETRY

All the (Héikē) party having been utterly crushed, claws have grown upon the breasts of the Héikē-crabs because of the resentment in their hearts.

Even the live tree set in the alcove has fallen down; and the mountains in the hanging picture tremble to the quaking made by the Yanari! ²⁸

Who set the house-pillar upside-down? Surely that must have been the work of a man with a knot in his heart. ²⁹

That house-pillar hewn in the mountains of Hida, and thence brought here and erected upside-down — what carpenter's work can it be? ³⁰

JAPANESE LYRICS

Uë shita wo
Chigaëté tatéshi
Hashira ni wa
Sakasama-goto no
Uréi aranan.



Kabé ni mimi
Arité, kiké to ka?
Sakashima ni
Tatéshi hashira ni
Yanari suru oto!



Uri-iyé no
Aruji wo toëba,
Oto arité :
Waré mé ga kuchi wo
Aku saka-bashira.



Omoikiya !
Sakasa-bashira no
Hashira-kaké
Kakinishit uta mo
Yamai ari to wa !

GOBLIN POETRY

As for that house-pillar mistakenly planted upside-down, it will certainly cause adversity and sorrow.³¹

O Ears that be in the wall! ³² listen, will ye ? to the groaning and the creaking of the house-post that was planted upside-down!

When I inquired for the master of the house that was for sale, there came to me only a strange sound by way of reply, — the sound of the upside-down house-post opening its eyes and mouth! (i.e. its knots and cracks.)

Who could have thought it! — even the poem inscribed upon the pillar-tablet, attached to the pillar which was planted upside-down, has taken the same (ghostly) sickness.³³

JAPANESE LYRICS

Nanigé naki
Ishi no Jizō no
Sugata saë,
Yo wa osoroshiki
Mikagé to zo naki.



Ita hitoë
Shita wa Jigoku ni,
Sumizomé no
Bōzu no umi ni
Déru mo ayashina !



Hégasan to
Rokuji-no-fuda wo,
Yurēi mo
Nam'mai dā to
Kazoēté zo miru.



Tada ichi no
Kami no o-fuda wa
Sasuga ni mo
Noriké naku to mo
Hégashi kanékéri.

GOBLIN POETRY

*Though the stone Fizō looks as if nothing were the matter with it, they say that at night it assumes an awful aspect.*³⁴

*Since there is but the thickness of a single plank (between the voyager and the sea), and underneath is Hell, 't is indeed a weird thing that a black-robed priest should rise from the sea !*³⁵

*Even the ghost that would remove the charms*³⁶
written with six characters actually tries to count them, repeating : " How many sheets are there ? " ³⁷

Of the august written-charms of the god (which were pasted upon the walls of the house), not even one could by any effort be pulled off, though the rice-paste with which they had been fastened was all gone.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Yo-arashi ni
Chishiho itadaku
Furu tsubaki,
Hota-hota ochiru
Hana no nama-kubi.



Kusa mo ki mo
Némuréru koro no
Sayo kazé ni,
Méhana no ugoku
Furu-tsubaki kana !



Tomoshihi no
Kagé ayashigé ni
Miyénuru wa
Abura shiborishi
Furu-tsubaki ka-mo?

GOBLIN POETRY

When by the night-storm is shaken the blood-crowned and ancient tsubaki-tree,³⁸ then one by one fall the gory heads of the flowers, (with the sound of) bota-bota!

When even the grass and the trees are sleeping under the faint wind of the night, — then do the eyes and the noses (or “the buds and the flowers”) of the old tsubaki-tree move!

As for (the reason why) the light of that lamp appears to be a Weirdness, — perhaps the oil was expressed from (the nuts of) the ancient tsubaki?³⁹

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

JAPANESE LYRICS

The following group of poems are all from the *Manyōshū*, or "Gathering of a Myriad Leaves," a vast collection of poems composed before the middle of the eighth century. They represent the old classic poetry at its purest, free from alien influence; and they offer us many suggestions as to the condition of Japanese life and thought twelve hundred years ago. The legend to which they refer is as follows: —

The great god of the firmament had a lovely daughter, Tanabata-tsumé, who passed her days in weaving garments for her august parent. She rejoiced in her work, and thought that there was no greater pleasure than the pleasure of weaving. But one day, as she sat before her loom at the door of her heavenly dwelling, she saw a handsome peasant lad pass by, leading an ox, and she fell in love with him. Her august father, divining her secret wish, gave her the youth for a husband. But the wedded lovers became too fond of each other, and neglected their duty to the god of the firmament; the sound of the shuttle was no longer heard, and the ox wandered, unheeded, over the plains of heaven. Therefore the great god was displeased, and he separated the pair. They were sentenced to live thereafter apart, with the Celestial River⁴⁰ between them; but it was permitted them to see each other once a year, on the seventh night of the seventh moon. On that night — providing the skies be clear — the birds of heaven make, with their bodies and wings, a bridge over the stream; and by means of that bridge the lovers can meet. But if there be rain, the River of Heaven rises, and becomes so wide that the bridge cannot be formed. So the husband and wife cannot always meet, even on the seventh night of

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

the seventh month; it may happen, by reason of bad weather, that they cannot meet for three or four years at a time. But their love remains immortally young and eternally patient; and they continue to fulfil their respective duties each day without fault,—happy in their hope of being able to meet on the seventh night of the next seventh month.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Amanogawa
Ai-muki tachité,
Waga koishi
Kimi kimasu nari
Himo-toki makéna!



Hisakata no
Ama no kawasé ni,
Funé ukété,
Koyoï ka kimi ga
Agari kimasan?



Kazé kumo wa
Futatsu no kishi ni
Kayoëdomo,
Waga toho-tsuma no
Koto zo kayowanu!



Tsubuté ni mo
Nagé koshitsu-béki,
Amanogawa
Hédatéréba ka mo,
Amata subé-naki!

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*He is coming, my long-desired lord, whom I have been waiting to meet here, on the banks of the River of Heaven. . . . The moment of loosening my girdle is nigh!*⁴¹

Over the Rapids of the Everlasting Heaven, floating in his boat, my lord will doubtless deign to come to me this very night.

Though winds and clouds to either bank may freely come or go, between myself and my far-away spouse no message whatever may pass.

To the opposite bank one might easily fling a pebble; yet, being separated from him by the River of Heaven, alas! to hope for a meeting (except in autumn) is utterly useless.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Aki-kazé no
Fukinishi hi yori
“Itsushika” to — ;
Waga machi koishi
Kimi zo kimaséru.



Amanogawa
Ito kawa-nami wa
Tatanédomo,
Samorai gatashi —
Chikaki kono sé wo.



Sodé furaba
Mi mo kawashitsu-béku
Chika-kerédo,
Wataru subé nashi,
Aki nishi aranéba.



Kagéroï no
Honoka ni miété
Wakarénaba ; —
Motonaya koïn
Aü-toki madé wa !

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

From the day that the autumn wind began to blow (I kept saying to myself), "Ah! when shall we meet?" — but now my beloved, for whom I waited and longed, has come indeed!

Though the waters of the River of Heaven have not greatly risen, (yet to cross) this near stream and to wait upon (my lord and lover) remains impossible.

Though she is so near that the waving of her (long) sleeves can be distinctly seen, yet there is no way to cross the stream before the season of autumn.

When we were separated, I had seen her for a moment only, — and dimly as one sees a flying midge; now I must vainly long for her as before, until time of our next meeting!

JAPANESE LYRICS

Hikoboshi no
Tsuma mukaë-buné
Kogizurashi, —
Ama-no-Kawara ni
Kiri no tatéru wa.



Kasumi tatsu
Ama-no-Kawara ni,
Kimi matsu to, —
Ikayō hodo ni
Mono-suso nurenu.



Amanogawa,
Mi-tsu no nami oto
Sawagu-nari :
Waga matsu-kimi no
Funadé-surashi mo.



Tanabata no
Sodé maku yoï no
Akatoki wa,
Kawasé no tazu wa
Nakazu to mo yoshi.

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

Metbinks that Hikoboshi must be rowing his boat to meet his wife,—for a mist (as of oar-spray) is rising over the course of the Heavenly Stream.

While awaiting my lord on the misty shore of the River of Heaven, the skirts of my robe have somehow become wet.

On the River of Heaven, at the place of the august ferry, the sound of the water has become loud: perhaps my long-awaited lord will soon be coming in his boat.

As Tanabata (slumbers) with her long sleeves rolled up, until the reddening of the dawn, do not, O storks of the river-shallows, awaken her by your cries.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Amanogawa
Kiri-tachi-wataru :
Kyō, kyō, to —
Waga matsu-koishi
Funadé-surashi !



Amanogawa,
Yasu no watari ni,
Funé ukété ; —
Waga tachi-matsu to
Imo ni tsugé koso.



Ō-sora yo
Kayō waré sura,
Na ga yué ni,
Amanokawa-ji no
Nazumité zo koshi.



Yachihoko no
Kami no mi-yo yori
Tomoshi-zuma ; —
Hito-shiri ni keri
Tsugitéshi omoëba.

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

(She sees that) a mist is spreading across the River of Heaven. . . . "To-day, to-day," she thinks, "my long-awaited lord will probably come over in his boat."

By the ferry of Yasu, on the River of Heaven, the boat is floating: I pray you tell my beloved that I stand here and wait.

Though I (being a Star-god) can pass freely to and fro, through the great sky, — yet to cross over the River of Heaven, for your sake, was weary work indeed!

From the august Age of the God-of-Eight-Thousand-Spears, she had been my spouse in secret only; yet now, because of my constant longing for her, our relation has become known to men.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Amé tsuchi to
Wakaréshi toki yo
Onoga tsuma ;
Shika zo té ni aru
Aki matsu aré wa.



Waga kōru
Niho no omo wa
Koyoī mo ka
Ama-no-kawara ni
Ishi-makura makan.



Amanogawa.
Mikomori-gusa no
Aki-kazé ni
Nabikafu miréba,
Toki kitarurashi.



Waga séko ni
Ura-koi oréba,
Amanogawa
Yo-funé kogi-toyomu
Kaji no 'to kikoyu.

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

From the time when heaven and earth were parted, she has been my own wife ;— yet, to be with her, I must always wait till autumn.

With my beloved, of the ruddy-tinted cheeks, this night indeed will I descend into the bed of the River of Heaven, to sleep on a pillow of stone.

When I see the water-grasses of the River of Heaven bend in the autumn wind (I think to myself) : “ The time (for our meeting) seems to have come.”

When I feel in my heart a sudden longing for my husband, then on the River of Heaven the sound of the rowing of the night-boat is heard, and the plash of the oar resounds.

JAPANESE LYRICS

Tō-zuma to
Tamakura kawashi
Nétaru yo wa,
Tori-gané na naki
Akéba aku to mo !



Yorozu-yo ni
Tazusawari ité
Ai mi-domo,
Omoi-sugu-béki
Koi naranaku ni.



Waga tamé to,
Tanabata-tsumé no,
Sono yado ni,
Oréru shirotai
Nuît ken kamo ?



Shirakumo no
I-ho é kakurité
Tō-kédomo,
Yoï-sarazu min
Imo ga atari wa.

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

In the night when I am reposing with my (now) far-away spouse, having exchanged jewel-pillows⁴² with her, let not the cock crow, even though the day should dawn.

Though for a myriad ages we should remain hand-in-hand and face to face, our exceeding love could never come to an end. (Why then should Heaven deem it necessary to part us?)

The white cloth which Tanabata has woven for my sake, in that dwelling of hers, is now, I think, being made into a robe for me.

Though she be far-away, and hidden from me by five hundred layers of white cloud, still shall I turn my gaze each night toward the dwelling-place of my younger sister (wife).

JAPANESE LYRICS

Aki saréba
Kawagiri tatéru
Amanogawa,
Kawa ni muki-ité
Kru yo zo ōki!



Hito-tosé ni
Nanuka no yo nomi
Aū-hito no —
Koī mo tsuki-néba
Sayo zo aké ni keru!



Toshi no koī
Koyōi tsukushité,
Asu yori wa,
Tsuné no gotoku ya
Waga koī oran.



Hikoboshi to
Tanabata-tsumé to
Koyōi aū ; —
Ama-no-Kawa to ni
Nami tatsu-na yumé!

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

When autumn comes, and the river-mists spread over the Heavenly Stream, I turn toward the river (and long); and the nights of my longing are many!

But once in the whole year, and only upon the seventh night (of the seventh month), to meet the beloved person — and lo! The day has dawned before our mutual love could express (or “satisfy”) itself!

The love-longing of one whole year having ended to-night, every day from to-morrow I must again pine for him as before!

Hikoboshi and Tanabata-tsumé are to meet each other to-night; — ye waves of the River of Heaven, take heed that ye do not rise!

JAPANESE LYRICS

Aki-kazé no
Fuki tadayowasu
Shirakumo wa,
Tanabata-tsumé no
Amatsu hiré kamo?



Shiba-shiba mo
Ai minu kimi wo,
Amanogawa
Funa-dé haya séyo
Yo no fukénu ma ni.



Amanogawa
Kiri tachi-watari
Hikoboshi no
Kaji no 'to kikoyu
Yo no fuké-yukéba.



Amanogawa
Kawa 'to sayakéshi:
Hikoboshi no
Haya kogu funé no
Nami no sawagi ka?

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

Oh! that white cloud driven by the autumn-wind — can it be the heavenly hiré⁴³ of Tanabata-tsumé?

*Because he is my not-often-to-be-met beloved,
hasten to row the boat across the River of Heaven
ere the night be advanced.*

*Late in the night, a mist spreads over the
River of Heaven; and the sound of the oar of Hikoboshi is heard.*

*On the River of Heaven a sound of plashing
can be distinctly heard: is it the sound of the rippling made by Hikoboshi quickly rowing his boat?*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Kono yūbé,
Furikuru amé wa,
Hikoboshi no
Haya kogu funé no
Kaī no chiri ka mo.



Waga tama-doko wo
Asu yori wa
Uchi haraī,
Kimi to inézuté
Hitori ka mo nen !



Kazé fukité,
Kawa-nami tachinu ; —
Hiki-funé ni
Watari mo kimasé
Yo no fukénu ma ni.



Amanogawa
Nami wa tatsutomo
Waga funé wa
Iza kogi iden
Yo no fukénu ma ni.

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Perhaps this evening shower is but the spray
(flung down) from the oar of Hikoboshi, rowing
his boat in haste.*

*From to-morrow, alas ! after having put my
jewel-bed in order, no longer reposing with my lord,
I must sleep alone !*

*The wind having risen, the waves of the river
have become high ; — this night cross over in a tow-
boat, I pray thee, before the hour be late !*

*Even though the waves of the River of Hea-
ven run high, I must row over quickly, before it
becomes late in the night.*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Inishié ni
Oritéshi hata wo ;
Kono yūbé
Koromo ni nuité —
Kimi matsu aré wo !



Amanogawa
Sé wo hayami ka mo ?
Nubatama no
Yo wa fuké ni tsutsu,
Awanu Hikoboshi !



Watashi-mori,
Funé haya watasé ; —
Hito-tosé ni
Futatabi kayō
Kimi naranaku ni !



Aki kazé no
Fukinishi hi yori,
Amanogawa
Kawasé ni dédachi ; —
Matsu to tsugé koso !

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Long ago I finished weaving the material;
and, this evening, having finished sewing the garment for him — (why must) I still wait for my lord?*

*Is it that the current of the River of Heaven
(has become too) rapid? The jet-black night advances — and Hikoboshi has not come!*

*Oh, ferryman, make speed across the stream!
— my lord is not one who can come and go twice in a year!*

On the very day that the autumn-wind began to blow, I set out for the shallows of the River of Heaven; — I pray you, tell my lord that I am waiting here still!

JAPANESE LYRICS

Tanabata no
Funanori surashi, —
Maso-kagami,
Kiyoki tsuki-yo ni
Kumo tachi-wataru.

THE RIVER OF HEAVEN

*Methinks Tanabata must be coming in her
boat ; for a cloud is even now passing across the clear
face of the moon.*

JAPANESE LYRICS

Perhaps the legend of Tanabata, as it was understood by those old poets, can make but a faint appeal to Western minds. Nevertheless, in the silence of transparent nights, before the rising of the moon, the charm of the ancient tales sometimes descends upon me, out of the scintillant sky,—to make me forget the monstrous facts of science, and the stupendous horror of Space. Then I no longer behold the Milky Way as that awful Ring of the Cosmos, whose hundred million suns are powerless to lighten the Abyss, but as the very Amanogawa itself,—the River Celestial. I see the thrill of its shining stream, and the mists that hover along its verge, and the water-grasses that bend in the winds of autumn. White Oribimé I see at her starry loom, and the Ox that grazes on the farther shore;—and I know that the falling dew is the spray from the Herdsman's oar. And the heaven seems very near and warm and human; and the silence about me is filled with the dream of a love unchanging, immortal,—forever yearning and forever young, and forever left unsatisfied by the paternal wisdom of the gods.

THE END

NOTES

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1. A cloak, lined usually with brightly colored silk.
2. Alluding to the Buddhist proverb: "The fallen flower returns not to the branch; the broken mirror never again reflects."
3. That is to say, the grace of their motion makes one think of the grace of young girls.
4. A creature of which weird things are told; for it is said to be a night wanderer from the Land of Darkness. It cries as though in pain the syllables "*ho-to-to-gi-su*."
5. Because an obi or girdle of very bright color can be worn only by children.
6. Written more than eleven hundred years ago on the death of the poet's little son.
7. Literally: "Repeat prayers saying, dead-of-presence-in twain facing, — small-pan cooking!" *Konabé-daté* is an idiomatic expression signifying a lovers' tête-à-tête, the idea suggested being that of the pleasure experienced by an amorous couple in eating out of the same dish.
8. The Wheel of Karma, the passage from birth to birth.
9. Deeds in a former existence.
10. A double meaning in the third line of the original may be rendered by reading for *of Akanuma* — *after the time of that happy relation*.
11. The meaning intended may be expressed thus: "Being on my way to pay a visit, I met with a being lovely as a flower; and

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for the sake of that lovely person, I am passing the day here.
. . . Fair one, wherefore that dawn-like blush before the hour
of dawn? — can it mean that you love me? ”

12. The Will-o'-the-Wisp is called fox-fire because the goblin-fox was supposed to create it.
13. The goblin-fox deceived men by transforming an old horse-bone into the form of a courtesan.
14. One afflicted with ghost-sickness. It was formerly supposed that the intense grief or longing of a lover caused the suffering spirit to create a double, one body going to join the beloved while the other remained at home.
15. This suggests the ghostly sympathy said to exist between a mirror and the soul of its possessor.
16. A typical play upon words. The toad was credited with supernatural powers and the phrase *keshō-no-mono* may signify goblin-thing as well as toilet article.
17. A mollusk credited with the power of creating a mirage by exhaling a vapor that to deluded mortals takes the form of *Shin-kirō*, the Elf-land of Far Eastern fable.
18. A person whose neck lengthens prodigiously during sleep, so that the head can wander around seeking what it may devour. Often the head is completely detachable.
19. A woman may become a *Rokuro-Kubi* without knowing it.
20. A beautiful phantom whose embrace is death.
21. The original is capable of another reading suggesting that the grace of her form is like that of willow branches weighed down by snow. ✱
22. The spirits of the drowned are said to follow after ships calling for a dipper. This should be given, but first, without the

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knowledge of the spirits, the bottom must be knocked out, otherwise they will use it to fill and sink the ship.

23. The Underworld of the Dead.
24. A famous chieftain of the Héiké clan lost in a great sea-fight. His ghost was addicted to making off with the anchors of ships moored in his domain.
25. Spirits of the drowned must remain in the water until they can lure the living to destruction. So his exclamation really means, "now perchance I shall be able to achieve salvation by drowning somebody."
26. Or "the avenging ghost."
27. A species bearing on their upper shells wrinklins resembling the outlines of an angry face. They are said to be the transformed spirits of the defeated Héiké warriors.
28. A goblin who makes a practice of shaking houses. It may also mean the sound of the shaking of a house during an earthquake.
29. A house-post must be set with the same end up as when it was growing. An "upside-down post" would groan in the night, open its cracks like mouths and its knots like eyes, and make itself generally a nuisance until the mistake was corrected.
30. Or, "for what evil design can this deed have been done"? *Takumi* may signify either a carpenter or an intrigue.
31. Literally, "upside-down-matter-sorrow," contrariety.
32. Alluding to the proverb, "There are ears in the wall," suggesting the necessity for care even in private conversation.
33. That is, is upside-down — all wrong.
34. Some statues of Jizō, the Buddhist savior of children's ghosts, are said to walk at night in various disguises.

NOTES

35. The bald body and staring eyes of the cuttlefish, bearing a distorted resemblance to the shaven head of a priest, suggested to the Japanese the name Priest of the Sea.
36. Japanese houses are protected against the entrance of evil spirits by charms written on rice paper and pasted on the door.
37. Or, repeating, "Hail to thee, O Buddha Amitâbha!" The idea of counting is also suggested in this alternate reading by the fact that the invocation to Amitâbha is usually accompanied by the numbering of beads on a rosary.
38. This tree, which in its old age is supposed to be a favorite haunt of goblins, bears a heavy crimson flower that drops with an audible thud often compared with the sound of a human head falling under the sword.
39. The oil used in Japanese lamps was obtained from the nuts of the *tsubaki*.
40. The Milky Way.
41. Lovers, ere parting, were wont to tie each other's inner girdle (*himo*) and pledge themselves to leave the knot untouched until the time of their next meeting.
42. A poetical phrase signifying the use of each other's arms as pillows.
43. Scarf.

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